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THE SITUATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA

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HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE

NINETY-NINTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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THE SITUATION IN CENTRAL AMERICA

FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 1985

UNITED STATES SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met at 10:09 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Richard G. Lugar (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Lugar, Helms, Evans, Pell, Biden, Zorinsky, and Cranston.

The CHAIRMAN. This hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is now called to order.

The committee is meeting this morning to consider the dimensions of the crisis in Central America and the Nicaraguan role in the region.

This hearing occurs at a time of intense congressional debate on the impending question of renewing assistance to opposition forces in Nicaragua.

The specific question we will address concerns assistance to the forces opposing the Sandinista regime in Managua. But the real questions and stakes involved are far larger. The broader issue is whether we have a realistic policy to deal with the challenge which the progressive institutionalization of a Marxist-Leninist regime in Nicaragua presents to U.S. policy and interests in Central America.

What is the congressional role in this evaluation? The Congress can help to outline a realistic approach to the difficult situation we face with respect to Nicaragua. It can judge whether the policy of the administration to date and the initiatives proposed by the administration constitute a positive step within such a design. The Congress can work with the administration to develop a policy consistent with our objectives and interests in the region.

Nicaragua comprises an integral part of a Central American crisis, one which we cannot ignore. There were clear efforts to deal in a normal and even generous way with the authorities in Managua during 1979 and 1980. And, although increasingly suspicious of the ominous trends emerging in Sandinista policy, the current administration attempted to arrive at a modus vivendi with the Nicaraguan regime during most of 1981. The Revolutionary Directorate, however, remained intransigent, and pursued its policies aimed at institutionalizing Marxist dictatorship, threatening its neighbors, building up its military capabilities and forging closer ties with Cuba and the East bloc.

As a result, the United States began channeling assistance to the armed opposition elements as a means to blunt Sandinista subver-

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sion of its neighbors, to impede consolidation of the regime and to provide an incentive for serious negotiations. At the same time, the policies of the Sandinistas produced growing disenchantment among the people of Nicaragua. An increasingly broad-based opposition emerged, with the clear intention of compelling the Sandinista leadership to honor the public commitment of the revolution to democracy, peace with its neighbors, and an autonomous foreign policy.

We must orient U.S. policy toward the reasonable demands of the opposition and to establish negotiations among the Nicaraguans themselves as the preferred option in resolving the questions at issue. But in the real world, and particularly with Marxists, successful negotiations take place only between forces exhibiting real power. The Sandinistas control the levers of power in Nicaragua, backed by considerable assistance from Cuba and the East bloc; thus, the President's call for sustenance to the opposition forces, through humanitarian assistance, during a period of negotiation.

Highest priority must be given to avoiding a situation that would leave the United States no alternative but that of sacrificing its interest and credibility in the region or of resorting to the direct application of military force. Congressional and administration efforts must be designed to avoid these extreme alternatives.

For the Congress simply to come out against administration proposals for aiding the opposition forces represents no policy. Dumping the Contras and abandoning the democratic cause in Central America is no alternative to current policy. To walk away from the opposition forces today for fear that we will lack the political will to eschew the direct application of force tomorrow is not responsible policy, in my judgment.

The Congress and the administration must come together on policy objectives and a realistic program of incentives, to encourage serious negotiations, lest our disagreements imply, incorrectly, that the Congress and the administration are not in agreement on the need to oppose Sandinista aims and policies.

Prudent assistance to the resistance forces in Nicaragua and negotiations among the Nicaraguans themselves are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary. Indeed, real negotiations are likely to become impossible the moment that such assistance is abandoned.

However critical, it is clear that a satisfactory resolution of the aid issue is only the first step toward a resolution of the situation in Nicaragua and the rest of Central America. Proposals to resolve the aid dilemma are but one component; there are other means which collectively might serve to convince the Sandinistas to adjust their policies in a constructive way.

The United States cannot walk away from the Central American crisis. It is too close at hand. The situation in Nicaragua remains the single most difficult obstacle to addressing adequately the other political, economic, and social problems in Central America.

The committee is pleased to welcome four of its most eminent Ambassadors to Latin America: Harry Bergold, Ambassador to Nicaragua; Thomas Pickering, Ambassador to El Salvador; John Negroponte, Ambassador to Honduras; and Harry Shlaudeman, Ambassador at Large for Central America.

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Before I ask you to proceed, I would like to call upon Senator Biden for an opening comment which he might wish to make.

Senator BIDEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, I agree with the chairman when he says that the United States cannot walk away from Central America. There is too much at stake for the United States and too much at stake for the people of Central America.

But over the past month, the administration has spent a good deal of time and energy—some might say in attempting to overwhelm the Congress and the people back home—with tons of information about the threat and the menace Nicaragua poses to peace in Central America and to the United States in the region.

I have sat through many hearings and briefings up until this year as a member of the Intelligence Committee and participated in the discussions and, you might say, the negotiations, with the administration over a period of time about what posture we should or should not take with regard to the Contras.

I have heard and seen the President's news conferences and briefings, and I have waded through the State Department's releases and publications about Nicaragua's menacing Sandinistas. It gets to the point where I, like the average guy, have a tendency to say all right, what do you need, how much, where, and go get them.

But I am not in that position in the sense that I can just say what do you need and go get them.

I am a U.S. Senator, and like my colleagues, like you, have to take responsibility for the policy or for the outcome of the policy.

I think Senator Lugar is correct. Right now we have no coherent policy. You have a policy. You, the administration, have a policy you wish to pursue. The Congress is not sure what policy it wishes to pursue and whether or not it is consistent with the policy the administration seeks to pursue.

I have, at least for my purposes in this hearing, two lines of questioning which I will be pursuing in order to sort out for me where I, as one Senator, will suggest or try to pursuade the Senate to go.

Those two lines of questioning are the following: Can we, as dispassionately as possible, get an assessment today from four of this Nation's experts, people on the ground, in place, in the region, on how menacing is the threat and what is the threat and the capability of the threat relative to the non-U.S. presence in the region?

For example, take the total number of Sandinista military personnel, including militia, and it is a heavy, an awesome figure, something we should be concerned about. But, if you add together the forces of other nations in the region, it seems somewhat less menacing.

Now, maybe that is too simplistic a comparison. Maybe it is not at all relevant that the other nations in the region, when combined, have a significant military capability. When you talk about tanks that the Nicaraguans have, it is important for us to know what are the capabilities of those tanks. When we talk about new, sophisticated helicopters which the Soviets have supplied the Nicaraguans, that is important. But how does that compare to the Honduran air force, and so on?

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I realize that you are not military experts, but you are men whose reputations precede you. You are known to know the detail of the region. And all of you have been involved—some, like Ambassador Shlaudeman, have been involved particularly in the Kissinger report—in more than just the parochial concerns and interests of the countries to which you are our ambassadors.

That is one line of questioning.

The second line of questioning that I would like to pursue, time permitting, will be this. In light of the fact that we are really in the throes of thrashing out what the policy will be, what is our objective? Where are we going? What is likely to happen if we take steps A, B, and C? Where does that lead to, as opposed to our taking steps C, D, and E? Where would that lead?

I do not think Latin America and Vietnam are comparable in any respect, other than possibly one, and that is I don't think we ever clearly defined what our objective was and how we are going to accomplish it in Southeast Asia. I am not sure, but we may be in the same predicament with regard to Latin America. We may say that it is because of the Congress, but, in my view, we don't have a clearly defined notion of where these actions may lead us.

I am going to pursue a line of questioning along those lines.

I sincerely welcome you. We need all of the input you can give us.

I realize that you, like representatives of every administration, are somewhat constrained. You may totally agree with the policy, or you may have private reservations. I would hope that, if you have private reservations, you will be inclined to do what is not usually done—though I don't expect it—and maybe you would share them with us publicly. If you have none, then I would seek none.

But I would like us to have as dispassionate a discussion of the nature of the threat and the relative force structures in the region as we possibly can so that we are in a position to be able to make some sound judgments.

I have one last point.

We are going to hear a lot, and we have already heard a lot—I hope we won't hear too much today—about how we are going to be abandoning the Contras if the Congress, as a whole, rejects any form of aid to the Contras.

I would point out to you—and two of you know this for certain—that the Intelligence Committee, when we decided in the first instance whether or not to support a Presidential finding early on to what degree we would be involved in the process of helping the Contras, several of us raised the question of what would happen if we get to the point that public policy and/or military policy dictates that we no longer should support the Contras. Aren't we by first taking this step locking ourselves in forever?

The administration said then and spokespersons said then no, that is not a problem. If public policy dictates that we change, we can take care of that.

My concern was, like we always do in foreign policy decisions, Democratic and Republican administrations alike, that we might embark upon a policy, whether it be to build an aircraft carrier, add a social program, or take a foreign policy action, and once, if in

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fact it has been concluded that it no longer makes sense, put forward the strongest argument to continue the program—assuming for the sake of discussion that it no longer makes sense—that we have already spent x billions of dollars on the weapon system, or we already have x million people on the rolls and can't cut them off, or we already initiated the policy and we would leave them hanging.

I don't find those very persuasive arguments.

I hope you will all remember when we get into that phase of the debate, if we do, in this body, what the administration said 4 years ago relative to that point.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator Biden.

Gentlemen, I will ask you to testify in this order: First, Ambassador Bergold, then Ambassador Pickering, Ambassador Negroponte, and Ambassador Shlaudeman.

All of you have submitted statements that appear to be very brief. I was going to suggest that you try to constrain your initial remarks to 10 minutes or less because I am certain that the questioning will be lively and we want to offer Senators ample amount of time to illuminate all of these issues while we have you here.

At this point, it is my pleasure to call upon Ambassador Harry Bergold, U.S. Ambassador to Nicaragua.

Ambassador Bergold.

STATEMENT OF HON. HARRY E. BERGOLD, JR., U.S. AMBASSADOR TO NICARAGUA

Ambassador BERGOLD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We do, each of us, have brief statements, which will constitute our opening remarks. I will read mine, and I can assure you that it will be much less than 5 minutes.

The Sandinista leadership faces four areas of serious challenge from its own people in 1985. The Nicaraguan economy is tattered and continues to decline. My personal estimate is that per capita GNP has probably declined from about $800 at the time of the 1979 revolution to about $500 today.

The Soviets and their allies are constructing an economic safety net under Nicaragua through the provision now of about 60 percent of its crude oil requirements, feed grains, and consumer goods. But economic deprivation faces the Sandinistas with a growing level of popular discontent.

Second, conscription, in a country with no tradition of a national army, means that every family in Nicaragua with draft-age sons must decide whether or not to contribute those sons to what is seen by many as a party army pursuing party objectives of keeping itself in power.

Third, church-state relations increasingly place the Nicaraguan people—deeply religious Catholics—in the position of choosing between institutions from which they have historically expected a higher degree of collaboration.

Finally, the reputation of the Sandinista leadership has eroded somewhat among the Nicaraguan people who find they, those leaders, were more appealing as revolutionaries than as governors. As

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a result, the Nicaraguan people are now aware that many of their problems flow from the internal decisionmaking and management of the Sandinista leadership and that not all of these problems, by any means, are caused by external factors.

The Sandinistas realize that these four areas of internal pressure, combined with the serious insurgency threat posed by the armed opposition, places enormous burdens on their resources and on their ability to consolidate the Marxist-Leninist revolution.

The Central American states are beginning to move toward reactivating regional economic cooperation. Were Nicaragua to join the regional trend toward strengthened democratic institutions, the prospects for augmented Central American economic cooperation would significantly improve, with resulting benefits for all the states, including Nicaragua.

As these factors combine, they will induce the Sandinista leadership increasingly to conclude—and this is a point in answer to Senator Biden's second area of concern—that it must reach a meaningful regional accord with its neighbors, an accord which will assure the political and economic pluralism for which the revolution was originally fought and won.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my opening statement. We would be prepared, if you wish, to have all of the opening statements read together at this point or, if you would like to question me, I would be very pleased to answer any inquiries you and the committee might have.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much. Ambassador Bergold. I think we will proceed with all four of your statements because members may very well want to question each of you or to ask responses to the same question of several of you.

So, at this point, I will ask Ambassador Pickering to continue with the testimony.

STATEMENT OF HON. THOMAS R. PICKERING, U.S. AMBASSADOR TO EL SALVADOR

Ambassador PICKERING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like, as well, to read my short statement.

El Salvador is a country which has had to contend with more than its share of difficult and divisive issues. On few, if any, issues have I seen the same unity of support and response of Salvadorans as I have to the President's April 4 peace initiative.

President Duarte and his Foreign Minister have spoken out in favor of the proposal.

The Salvadoran press, which, in general, reflects the views of the parties of the right, has been favorable.

Only the guerrillas have disparaged it, and they have a serious problem because they have previously been on record as favoring an internal dialog in El Salvador. The Sandinista rejection of the President's initiative for an internal dialog in Nicaragua makes them even more uncomfortable.

As soon as I had presented President Reagan's proposal to President Duarte, he decided to send President Reagan a letter of support. This, in part, is what he wrote to President Reagan: "Your initiative and approach have my complete support and I strongly

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urge all of the friends of Central America in your Congress to give it their full backing. It is the right step at the right time in our quest for peace and democracy in this region."

As you know, a central part of our policy in El Salvador has been to support an internal dialog between the Government and the guerrilla fronts. The objective is to achieve peace, reconciliation, and the incorporation of the guerrillas into El Salvador's evolving democracy and social reforms.

The process was given a real boost with President Duarte's initiative of October 1984, to restart the dialog and his presentation of a broad offer to the guerrillas of amnesty, reincorporation into the political process, freedom to participate fully in elections, freedom to develop their own political and associated organizations and a willingness to discuss and insure such issues as security, access to the media, and so on.

This is not a proposal for power sharing. This was the culmination of a long process in El Salvador and it looks ahead to further meetings.

I have not met a Member of Congress who was not in favor of such an internal dialog to establish peace and democracy in El Salvador.

The symmetry between El Salvador and Nicaragua in this regard is striking and uncanny. For years, El Salvador has been the victim of Nicaraguan intervention through Sandinista support for the guerrillas. Logistical supplies continue to flow. Salvadoran soldiers continue to capture or to be attacked with Russian hand grenades, Bulgarian ammunition, and U.S. made M-16's, shipped originally to Vietnam and now engaged in a new war, having arrived in El Salvador via Cuba and Nicaragua.

El Salvador and its President have championed a new effort to find peace through dialog, moderated by the Roman Catholic Church in El Salvador. A parallel offer of peace and democratic reintegration is being sought for those fighting for a democratic opportunity in Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan democratic resistance has not demanded power sharing, as have the Salvadoran guerrillas, but, rather, the right to participate in a truly open and free electoral process.

President Duarte and the people of El Salvador would welcome such a truly democratic approach by the Salvadoran guerrillas.

The message of a congressional rejection of the President's peace proposal would be serious for all Salvadorans and Central Americans. They would not understand the withdrawal of support. They would be deeply concerned by the contradictions: Nicaraguan intervention in El Salvador is to be accepted or at best to be ignored; efforts to support Nicaraguans fighting for democracy in their own country are to be rejected. El Salvador's dialog is to be warmly welcomed and applauded; Sandinista rejection of an internal dialog for peace and democracy in Nicaragua is to be rewarded.

The message today from El Salvador is clear. Real progress in all areas is being made. A major outstanding issue remains the future of Nicaragua and its capacity to interfere in El Salvador. The failure to give the needed support and backing in the Congress will set back, politically and psychologically, growing Salvadoran confi-

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dence in themselves and in their democratic future in Central America.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Ambassador Pickering.

Ambassador Negroponte.

STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN D. NEGROPONTE, U.S. AMBASSADOR TO HONDURAS

Ambassador NEGROPONTE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, the situation in Honduras is influenced by its unique geography, bordered as it is by Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala.

Honduras is, therefore, especially sensitive and vulnerable to developments in neighboring countries.

Because of its geography, Honduras has two principal strategic concerns. First is the military buildup in Nicaragua, which is disproportionate to any defensive need. Second, there is a strong preoccupation with the guerrilla war in El Salvador and a concern that, if El Salvador were to fall into Communist hands, then Honduras would be targeted next.

The Honduran Government, a product of free elections, shares our commitment to democratic ideals and economic progress. But they, as well as the overwhelming majority of the Honduran people, believe these goals will be seriously compromised unless steps are taken by Nicaragua to moderate its behavior.

Since 1982, the Government of Honduras has been in the forefront of those countries advocating a negotiated solution to the region's problems. They advanced a comprehensive regional peace plan before the OAS in March 1982, and have been extremely active participants in the Contadora peace process since its inception.

They are exponents of the view that promotion of internal dialog and reconciliation in each of the Central American countries is indispensable, not only to the process of democratization, but to the building of peace—because history offers few, if any, examples of representative democracies going to war against each other.

In this spirit, and because he sees it as a gesture supportive of the Contadora process and as an incentive to democracy in Nicaragua, President Suazo of Honduras has publicly endorsed President Reagan's peace initiative.

I would just like to take one final moment to address the issue of what, in Honduran eyes, might happen if the funding for the freedom fighters were definitively cut off.

In Honduras I believe this would be viewed as a signal of our acquiescence in the consolidation of a Marxist-Leninist regime in Nicaragua. Sooner or later, it would have even further debilitating effects on the viability of Nicaraguan freedom fighters, who already suffer from logistics problems and unrealiable sources of supply. Many Hondurans are convinced that, with their hands freed, or at least freer, inside of Nicaragua, the Sandinistas will be even better able to support revolutionary activities in El Salvador, Honduras, and elsewhere in the region.

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Last, but not least, Honduras is already host to some 16,000 United Nations-sponsored Nicaraguan refugees, plus some 30,000 to 40,000 who have, one way or another, integrated into the Honduran economy. There is no telling how many more Nicaraguans would seek refuge in Honduras if the resistance in Nicaragua were permanently eclipsed and the hope for pluralism completely terminated.

But the numbers would, no doubt, be very high indeed, and that would just be the beginning of a completely new and, ultimately, even more costly set of problems posed by the consolidation of a Cuban-Soviet client on the mainland of our hemisphere.

Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Ambassador Negroponte.

Ambassador Shlaudeman.

STATEMENT OF HON. HARRY W. SHLAUDEMAN, AMBASSADOR AT LARGE, SPECIAL ENVOY FOR CENTRAL AMERICA

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have a brief statement on the relationship of the issues we are discussing here today to the negotiations in Central America.

I have served as the President's Special Envoy for Central America since the Senate confirmed me last March.

During that time, I have made 28 visits to Latin America, that is, to Central America and the countries of the Contadora group, and have held a total of 149 meetings with chiefs of state and foreign ministers of the countries involved. This is to say that we have not been idle on the diplomatic front.

The purpose of all of this activity has been to encourage a comprehensive regional agreement under Contadora auspices, one that would translate the 21 objectives agreed to by all nine Contadora participants into fully verifiable and enforceable commitments.

Those objectives, as in all official Contadora documents and drafts, call for national reconciliation where internal conflicts exist, reconciliation, in the words of the Document of Objectives, "with a view to fostering participation in democratic political processes." The President's initiative is directed at this same objective. It is fully compatible with Contadora and strongly supportive of the negotiating process.

We have supported that process all along. At the request of Mexico for the specific purpose of expediting Contadora, we undertook direct talks with the Government of Nicaragua. There were nine sessions, totaling some 60 hours of discussions. These talks were useful in permitting both sides to air their views. But the talks never really achieved anything because we never agreed on whether their purpose was to support Contadora, which was our view, or substitute for it, which implicitly was the Nicaraguan view.

At the first meeting and repeatedly thereafter, I made the point that there would be no peace in Central America, treaty or no treaty, in the absence of national reconciliation in a democratic framework.

The Sandinista reply was to refuse to discuss the issue.

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I said, in turn, that my purpose was not to negotiate the details of their internal political arrangements, but to urge them to face up to the issue as one to be worked out among Nicaraguans.

To this appeal, we have seen no response whatsoever.

My experience in dealing with the Sandinistas convinces me that they contemplate no significant internal political changes to comply with the commitments they would assume under a Contadora agreement.

This is true despite the fact that the Contadora draft the Sandinistas said they would accept contains commitments to establish democratic political systems and democratic freedoms—free press, free speech, and electoral competition under equality of conditions.

I am persuaded that there must be strong incentives for the Sandinistas to go to the negotiating table with their opposition. This is certainly the view in the region.

Ambassadors Pickering and Negroponte have spoken about attitudes in El Salvador and Honduras.

I was in Costa Rica the week after the President announced his initiative. All with whom I spoke there were strongly supportive of it.

The Costa Ricans see national reconciliation in Nicaragua and an open, democratic society as their only reliable security guarantee. They have no army, no other means to protect themselves.

The President's proposal offers a unique opportunity to get that process underway. The strong incentives for the Sandinistas to make that move are there. Without them, without real incentives, I just don't believe they will move at all. I think an effective resistance is the only incentive that will work.

Finally, from our standpoint, I think it is only good negotiating sense not to give up something so critical as support for the resistance in exchange for nothing—and before there have been any real negotiations at all.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Ambassador Shlaudeman.

Without objection, the Chair will ask that we have a 10-minute limit on questions from members on the first round and perhaps we will have a second round of opportunity to question witnesses.

I would like to begin the questioning by mentioning that we had a visit in the Foreign Relations Committee with the distinguished President of Costa Rica, President Monge, on Monday, at a luncheon meeting, at which a number of us had an opportunity to question the President on his observations on the future of his own country as well as progress of other countries in Central America.

He made a striking observation, of which I was unaware, that Costa Rica in the past 2 years has apparently absorbed 200,000 refugees. It has a population, or it did have a population, of about 2 million prior to this change. President Monge's observation was that in the event things do not go well for a variety of reasons in Nicaragua, he anticipates that, involuntarily, Costa Rica will absorb many more persons.

I think that point has been made with regard to Honduras this morning, already, and the estimates of this type of movement are truly significant.

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Nicaragua is not that large a country to begin with, with, I suppose, an estimated 3 million persons. I suppose one way of solving the problem is if a significant percentage of the people abandon the country, this leaves matters to be determined by the relatively few who remain. But the dislocations pose enormous problems for all of our friends, including fragile democracies that we are supporting all around the region.

Now, the critical question, it seems to me, that has come forward in the debate among people of good will in the Congress boils down to this: Should our policy be one of activity which would change the nature of the government in Nicaragua, or should we live and let live and say, for instance, that although we abhor Marxist-Leninism or whatever is occurring there, this is essentially what is there and, through a policy of containment, try to save our friends all around—letting the Nicaraguans sort of work out their fate, whatever it may be. As Ambassador Bergold has pointed out, it is apparently a fairly grim fate now, if, in fact, the per capita income is down to $500 a person and falling. This is a disaster in the making for those who remain, quite apart from those who leave.

I think we have a real problem of a policy decision here.

The President's decision, obviously, has been to activate forces that might lead to change. Whether that is going to prevail, I don't know.

We have a real division, as you have perceived, in the Congress as to the degree of our involvelment, and whether it will be directed toward activity or containment.

There are still others in a third group, which I do not disparage, who believe that the use of force at any time and under any conditions is probably a bad idea. Although they might not eschew the use of force theoretically, they would be hard pressed to find any occasion, anywhere in the world, where the United States ought to be involved in the use of military force. Thus they would be unhappy over the thought of force being used directly or indirectly in this particular instance.

I would say that your testimony today is very important as to why we ought to be taking risks that are involved in this kind of foreign policy.

I would like to start by asking you, Ambassador Shlaudeman, this question, on which you have already testified directly. In your judgment, there will not be movement in negotiations. You have pointed out that diplomacy has had a fairly good chance—140-some meetings, 28 visits, endless conversations. But, without there being the pressure apparently provided by the Contra activity, is it your judgment that negotiations simply will not lead to change in the internal workings of the Nicaraguan Government and, therefore, we are left with the status quo or containment?

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. Yes, Mr. Chairman.

As I said in my statement, listening to what they have had to say to me on the subject certainly left me with the conviction that they have no intention of making any significant internal changes, even in the event that there should be a Contadora agreement.

I can see no possibility of achieving the kind of democratization, the kind of opening of that society which I think, as you have indicated from your conversation with President Monge, is a security

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as well as an ideological goal. I see no opportunity of achieving that unless sufficient pressures are exerted to persuade them that there must be an internal dialog, a dialog with the real opposition, armed and unarmed.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me ask this question of any of you. In the event the will of the Congress is not to support the Contra efforts and the result of our votes, either next week or subsequently, is simply that that is a dead end, what policies could be substituted? Try on for size, if you will, the breaking off of diplomatic relations, elimination of foreign trade between Nicaragua and the United States, or anything else. Are there any adequate substitutes—or any substitutes, adequate or not—that are likely to bring about the type of pressure that we think the Contra effort would be to bring about negotiations?

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. I think it is quite clear, Mr. Chairman, that, as far as the Sandinistas are concerned, the real pressure point is the armed opposition. This was certainly quite plain to me.

Speaking personally, I think the other measures that you mentioned lead inevitably to the policy of containment that you referred to earlier.

Senator Biden mentioned the Kissinger Commission and the Kissinger Commission report. During the course of the commission, we examined these alternatives in considerable detail, and we concluded that containment would be an extremely expensive and very uncertain policy. I can say quite frankly that we had doubts that there would be the political will in this country to sustain it over a lengthy period of time.

The CHAIRMAN. So, you concluded in the Kissinger Commission that, not only was containment inadequate, but probably there would not be the political will to sustain it, and, in essence, we would disengage Central America until things festered and we had to revisit it in some other form, I suppose. Z[UPDATE] NO. NAME DATE J. 49-076 F. 37-41 EXT. A076A.007

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. That was certainly the conclusion of most of the Commission members. I think the report pretty well reflects that point of view.

The CHAIRMAN. Ambassador Bergold, from your personal observation, I was stunned, in a way, by your estimates of the income in Nicaragua. Why, $500 per capita is a very low figure of personal income. This begins to approach the most underdeveloped or undeveloped societies in the world.

What is the basis of your belief that privation has reached this point?

Ambassador BERGOLD. Mr. Chairman, it mostly has to do with redirection of national resources. The percentage of the national budget of Nicaragua which is going into military expenditures, even as published—and we have reasons to question the numbers—rose from a planned 25 percent in 1984 to a planned 40 percent in 1985.

My suspicion is, looking at the actual flow and distribution of resources as we see it on the ground, that those numbers should have been higher for 1984 and will be higher for 1985.

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This, of course, deprives the consumption sectors of resources that would otherwise flow to them. Food production is diverted for the military. Production of other basic items flows elsewhere. This also is true of the production of export crops. Nicaragua has a very primitive economy. Most of the light industry disappeared with the last government. It has now returned to a few basic export crops—coffee, cotton, and sugar. The combination of the war and of trying to socialize and put state management into these large agricultural sectors has reduced production and export earnings. This, too, impacts on per capita GNP.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Senator Biden.

Senator BIDEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, once again I agree with the chairman's characterization of the divisions within the Congress. I would just amplify on that slightly.

There are those who suggest that they will give support for policies that, in fact, provide a framework for containment—that is, let the Nicaraguans be the Nicaraguans, as long as they don't interfere anywhere else and as long as what they do in Nicaragua does not impact directly on U.S. security, such as Soviet bases, as a single example, in Nicaragua.

There are those who believe that there is an ideological and moral imperative that we have which requires us to erase from the isthmus a Marxist-Leninist regime. And there are those who, I sadly acknowledge, I don't think would use force anywhere but when a hostile force was crossing the border, and then it would depend on what State they were marching into. [Laughter.]

But it seems to me that, if we eliminate the last category, the vast majority of our colleagues fall into the first two categories, in both political parties. At least that is my political judgment.

If you accept that—and for the sake of this line of questioning, I would like you to consider accepting that political judgment—it then leads us to how we can best accomplish each of the two objectives, either to contain under the circumstances, where they are not interfering with their neighbors and not posing a direct threat to the United States of America; or, if you take the ideological or the moral imperative route, how do we, in fact, effect a change in that government?

So, my first question is—and, Ambassador Negroponte, you may not want the credit, but you are given great credit, for being one of the architects of the Contra policy—can you define for us what is the objective of the administration policy? Is it to contain, as was originally advertised to the Intelligence Committee, that is to merely cut off the flow of arms to the rebels in El Salvador and to prevent interference through pressure? I remember vividly the discussions, where we were told that, as long as they are worrying about aggression or transgression in their own country, they won't be off in Costa Rica, or El Salvador, or in Panama with terrorist activities. That, as I understood it as a member of the Intelligence Committee for 8 years, was the original objective.

That objective, however, seems to have grown and changed.

Can you define for us what the objective of the administration's policy is in broad terms? Is it to contain or is it to force, change,

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pressure, whatever, so that the present government and policies of the government no longer exist in Nicaragua?

What is the objective?

Ambassador NEGROPONTE. Senator, subject to correction or modification by my colleague on my right, who is responsible for implementing our negotiating policy, I would say that our objectives are very clearly stated in our negotiating position. They are to promote and encourage Nicaragua to modify its behavior. In particular, to reduce its military buildup and restore the military equilibrium in the region, to remove Soviet and Cuban advisers from their country, to cease exporting revolution to neighboring countries, such as El Salvador, and to move toward internal reconciliation and democratization.

Those have been clearly set out in our negotiating position and are the cornerstone of our policy toward the region.

Senator BIDEN. I am not suggesting that they have not. I wanted them restated.

Now let me ask a different question and ask any one of your colleagues to respond, including you, yourself.

Assuming that, with the ability to independently verify, we were convinced that, (a) there was a military build-down, that there was a diminution of their military capacity; (b) that Cuban and Soviet advisers and personnel were reduced and moving toward elimination; and (c) there was no longer the export of revolution; but that (d) they continued internally toward, well, let's take an outrageous example, that of Albania—and nothing resembling democracy came to fruition. Albania was a Stalinist state. It did not export much of anything. It could hardly take care of itself. Assuming that there was a Communist regime which continued to be in place, but the other three conditions were met and we were satisfied they were met, I assume that is not sufficient. Is that correct?

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. Let me say, Senator, that what you described is something that is not going to happen.

Senator BIDEN. I am not saying it will, but assuming that it is, then what?

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. Assuming that all of those things took place, and assuming that somehow these people who have dedicated their lives to an ideology were to change their ideology——

Senator BIDEN. No, I don't say they should change their ideology.

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. Senator, these people call themselves "internationalists." That means they really do believe in spreading the revolution. In that sense they would have to change their ideology. They would have to become nationalists rather than internationalists.

Quite frankly, I don't see that ever happening——

Senator BIDEN. Well, let me say, then, if, in fact, our objectives continue to be as stated, I would like to examine for a moment what role the Contras play in this. Is the objective of our support for the Contras to bring sufficient physical pressure upon the government so that government, in addition to noninterference in the region concludes that it should no longer exist? One of your colleagues mentioned history and how democratic nations have not been likely to start wars against other democratic nations. Like-

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wise, I know of no government that has self-immolated. I know of no government—there probably is one somewhere in history—but I know of no government that says, faced with the prospect that this pressure is going to continue, the only way for me to stop it is for me to end my government, I don't know when that has happened. And that is really what we are asking.

So, what do we expect, if everything works like clockwork, if you get everything you want, if the plan works, what do we expect the Contras to produce?

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. The declaration issued by the opposition on March 2 does not call for the Sandinistas to remove themselves from power.

Senator BIDEN. If I could stop you there, just as you pointed out to me that there is an internationalist ideology and they would have to change who they are, in fact, we are asking them to democratize the government. Democratization of the government means the end of their leadership. You will not have the same foreign minister. You will not have the same prime minister. You will not have the same president. You will not have the same folks, in all probability, if they are as bad as I, and you, believe they are. And they are the ones now making the decisions.

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. The opposition declaration offers to recognize Daniel Ortega as President until they could hold a plebiscite.

They claim that they are so popular that——

Senator BIDEN. But we know that is not true. You know that that is not true, right?

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. I would have to ask my colleague, the Ambassador.

Senator BIDEN. Gentlemen, my time is about up and I will have to come back to this. But do any of you believe that in a plebiscite, Ortega could win? In a free election?

Ambassador BERGOLD. I don't think so, Senator. But I think he could achieve a very sizeable minority vote that would continue the Sandinistas as a viable opposition party in a democratic system. I don't think he would have to disappear.

Senator BIDEN. Would we be willing to allow that to happen, to have him a viable party, a Communist, a Marxist-Leninist opposition party that may some day win?

Ambassador BERGOLD. There are many countries in the world with Marxist-Leninist parties, Senator.

Senator BIDEN. I understand that.

Ambassador BERGOLD. I certainly don't think that the declaration of March 2 or any policy statements of this government have contemplated the inability of that party to exist.

Senator BIDEN. Would we change our policy if, in fact, Ortega and the Sandinistas were popularly elected? Would we say it is all right then to have a Marxist-Leninist regime in Nicaragua, if they were popularly elected in the country?

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. The draft Contadora agreement calls for periodic elections. As long as they were committed to periodic elections, then, yes.

Senator BIDEN. Even if they were Marxist-Leninist.

All right. I will get back to this.

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My time is up.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator Biden.

Senator Helms.

Senator HELMS. Mr. Chairman, you very graciously invited me to take some time to give an opening statement, which I declined, because I wanted to hear our witnesses. But if you will permit me to take 2 or 3 minutes prior to my beginning my questioning, I would be most grateful.

The CHAIRMAN. Very well, then.

Without objection, we will hear your opening statement.

Senator HELMS. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, it cannot be said of these four gentlemen, all of whom are career diplomats of the United States, that they did not exercise restraint in describing the seriousness of the situation in Central America. As a matter of fact, I sat here hoping that you would go a little bit further.

As each of you was speaking, I thought of the anomaly that exists in the United States, a country which, over the years, has expressed a firm belief in the Monroe Doctrine. As far as I know there has never been a repeal of that. Yet, we have a situation where the President is criticized for having no policy in Central America, when, in fact, his policy has been mutilated by the political circumstances in this country.

Now I hear many pious protests about we must do this and we must not intervene; but I don't hear any of these people complaining about any Communist government anywhere in the world. I don't hear them open their mouths about Afghanistan. I don't hear them complain about the slaughter in Cambodia.

You never hear them mumble a word about the Communist dictator in Zimbabwe, which took office after Bishop Muzorewa a very fine prime minister, was literally removed.

So we have a serious double standard. They throw the roadblock up and say no, you can't help anybody who is anti-Communist. We are going to block you in the House, we are going to block you in the Senate, we are going to clip your wings, Ronald Reagan. You are not going to be able to do it.

Moreover, Mr. Chairman—and I will include the major news media of this country in this—you never hear any real discussion about the peril to the United States when Central America falls into the hands of the Marxists.

Senator Lugar is absolutely correct. The President of Costa Rica was here earlier this week, and it was a result of my questioning about the refugees pouring into Costa Rica from Nicaragua that we learned that 10 percent of the total population of Nicaragua has moved into Costa Rica.

This happens to be the same 10 percent estimate that occurred when we withdrew from our commitment in Southeast Asia and the Communists came in, slaughtering, pillaging, burning, and destroying. That gave us the Boat People, but nobody remembers them now.

I remember the KAL-007 flight, a plane that I almost took. The Senate, even on that occasion, was willing to merely say well, that's a pretty bad thing.

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I want to know what happens if El Salvador falls. I don't think Ambassador Pickering will deny that such a possibility exists. What about Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico? Ten percent? A hundred million people live between our southern borders and Panama. I think it would be much higher than 10 percent of 100 million. I think it would be 20 or 25 million people pouring over our borders.

I wish I could roll forward the time machine and hear all of these people who say oh, you can't do anything, you can't intervene. I would like to see what they are going to say when we have 15 million, 20 million, 25 million refugees pouring into Texas.

Yes, sir, Mr. Chairman. You'd better believe that the people down there on the Texas border understand right now.

Wouldn't it be better for us to supply the minimal assistance, both military and otherwise, to these people who want to regain and retain freedom in their own lands, and to prevent the takeover of Central America by the Communists? How many hundreds of billions of dollars would it cost the American people to remedy the mistake that I fear is being made today?

You don't hear anything about Soviet troops in Syria. Oh, no, we don't discuss what the Soviets are doing.

I think we are missing the boat. I think America is being placed in peril, and when I say "America," I mean the United States of America.

Each of you gentlemen is a career diplomat. I hope that at some time you can spell out at whatever forum you may have that it is not a choice between a little bit of noninterventionism here and something else. It may be the choice of survival, of freedom in the United States of America.

Ambassador Pickering, does President Duarte support President Reagan's policy in Central America?

Ambassador PICKERING. Yes, very much, Senator Helms.

He wrote a very constructive letter to President Reagan supporting his initiative, and I had the honor of quoting some of that in my original statement today.

Senator HELMS. Does he support both military assistance to the Nicaraguan freedom fighters, approved yesterday by the Senate Appropriations Committee and other aid?

Ambassador PICKERING. President Duarte says he supports the President's initiative in Central America, and by that I take it he supports the entire initiative of the President in Central America.

Senator HELMS. Do you think a military victory by the Marxist guerrillas is attainable in El Salvador?

Ambassador PICKERING. I see it as increasingly difficult.

Our latest assessment of the military situation, with no change in the outside support—and I add those caveats because you understand those caveats are very important, sir.

Senator HELMS. They are very important.

Ambassador PICKERING. We believe the Salvadoran military would not be subject to something we had feared might occur several years ago, a disintegration in the face of the guerrilla military and political effort. We believe that is increasingly unlikely, less likely—whatever words of art you want to describe something

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that—or as close to being impossible without making the judgment that it is impossible.

Senator HELMS. I guess the point I am leading to is this. Do you think the United States—and I suppose I should further delineate—would the Reagan administration accept seeking a military victory in El Salvador in the event of a takeover by the Communists?

Ambassador PICKERING. Well, those are very "iffy" questions. A takeover by the Communists in El Salvador I think would produce a serious reexamination of our entire policy. I am not in a position to speak for the President or the administration about what they might do in the iffy circumstances.

You know that career diplomats abhor iffy questions.

Senator HELMS. Well, then, let me ask Duarte.

How would he feel about it? Has he ever spoken of militarily defeating the Marxist-Leninist guerrillas?

Ambassador PICKERING. President Duarte, I think, has recognized the absolute necessity of providing security for his people in order to achieve his political, economic, and social goals, which are generally those that the administration has supported.

I have spoken often of the necessity, the absolute necessity, of the defense and security assistance of the United States. At the same time, looking at the broad sweep of our policy, we have recognized that our efforts have not been sufficient to achieve a total support for democracy, peace, change, reconciliation in Central America. I would put it in that context.

I think President Duarte clearly supports that concept. He said that a number of times in public.

Senator HELMS. The Christian Democrats now have an apparent majority in the Legislative Assembly in El Salvador. Do you believe the Assembly is going to engage in efforts to implement further land reform and further nationalization?

Before you answer that, the banks are still nationalized down there, aren't they?

Ambassador PICKERING. Yes, they are.

Senator HELMS. Are export systems still nationalized?

Ambassador PICKERING. Sugar and coffee only.

Senator HELMS. Well, that's about all there is.

How about land reform? Do you think the Assembly will say gung ho on that, and let's go?

Ambassador PICKERING. It appears from the unofficial results that President Duarte's party will have a majority.

President Duarte has indicated publicly that he intends to seek a broader base for his government. He has said on a number of occasions that his purposes are to consolidate the reforms that have been made. I have seen no indication from what he has said that he or his party intend to do anything but try to make an economic success as well as a political and social success of land reform.

The rumor mills may have said something about that, but I have seen nothing that one could consider being an official intention to proceed along that line.

In fact, President Duarte, before and during his various campaigns, has indicated that he wants to focus heavily on the private sector and to move ahead to make the reforms that we talked

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about more economically productive, rather than expanding their scope at the present time.

We've talked about urban reform, and he has denied that he has any intention of carrying out an urban reform.

Senator HELMS. Rumor mills are sort of like politicians. They are always positive and are sometimes right.

Ambassador PICKERING. Well, sir, they are very prolific in El Salvador.

Senator HELMS. Well, you'd better believe it.

The Salvadoran constitution, as of now, prohibits negotiations with the Marxist guerrillas, is that correct?

Ambassador PICKERING. I am not sure that that is a caveat or a position. What President Duarte has entered into is a dialog. He distinguishes between that and the negotiation and has given us and his people an assurance that he intends to pursue that dialog on the basis of his constitution.

I am not a Salvadoran constitutional lawyer, but I would be glad to get you for the record an answer to that question.

Senator HELMS. I would appreciate it, though I think I know the answer to my own question.

[The information referred to follows:]

SALVADORAN CONSTITUTION AND NEGOTIATIONS WITH GUERRILLAS

Only a Salvadoran legal expert can provide a definitive interpretation of the Salvadoran Constitution. All parties in El Salvador appear to agree that the government may not negotiate an agreement that abrogates or violates the constitution. I have not heard any serious allegations to the effect that President Duarte's dialog with the guerrillas violates the constitution in and of itself. President Duarte has stated repeatedly in the past that the ultimate objective in his dialog with the guerrilla left is to bring them within the democratic and constitutional process of El Salvador.

President Duarte finds legal authorization for dialogue in Article 168 of the constitution, which enumerates "obligations of the President of the Republic." The third subparagraph defines one such obligation as to "procure social harmony, preserve peace and internal tranquility and the security of the human person as a member of society." Although there has been no formal constitutional definition of this provision, it enjoys wide recognition as the legal basis for Duarte's dialogue initiative, which is specifically designed to restore social harmony and domestic tranquility. In sum, I know of no constitutional prohibition and Duarte sees in Article 168 a sanction for the dialog.

Senator HELMS. Ambassador Negroponte, how is your nice wife?

Ambassador NEGROPONTE. Very well, thank you.

Senator HELMS. Give her my best. She is a great lady.

I remember being there and listening to President Suazo's inaugural address. Do you remember how he praised the United States and said he was a friend of the United States and would support the United States?

Ambassador NEGROPONTE. Yes, sir.

Senator HELMS. We looked at each other and said, boy, when have you heard that.

How do you think the Hondurans will react if the aid to the freedom fighters in Nicaragua is approved or not approved? Answer it both ways, please.

Ambassador NEGROPONTE. In my statement, Senator Helms, I did mention the impact that it might have on the effectiveness of the

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freedom fighters themselves. I also mentioned the refugee question to which you alluded in your remarks.

Those certainly would be two of the issues that would arise.

But I think, more fundamentally, they would react much the same as we, with respect to the loss of an element of pressure and an incentive on Nicaragua to moderate its behavior.

As I said in my remarks, one of the two principal strategic concerns of Honduras is the serious threat that Nicaragua's behavior represents to that country, in terms of the military buildup, its behavior vis-a-vis El Salvador, its ties with Cuba and the Soviet Union, and the absence, thus far, of any meaningful national reconciliation or democratization.

So, I think in Honduras, generally, and with the Honduran Government, in particular, a definitive end to support for the Contras would be viewed as a serious setback to our policy.

Senator HELMS. The unrestrained answer is that it would be a disaster.

That is my answer.

The Contadora treaty, how did the Government of Honduras react to that when it was first presented?

Ambassador NEGROPONTE. Honduras, as you know, Senator, has been a very active member of the Contadora process. But, with respect to the particular document that was tabled last September, Honduras was one of the countries that had reservations about certain of its provisions. They were concerned about the provisions concerning verification of any eventual agreement, and also the issue of the simultaneity of the way in which provisions would be implemented. As a result, the Government of Honduras took the lead, working with the Governments of Costa Rica and El Salvador, to develop an alternative draft which they submitted to the Contadora process on October 20 of last year.

Senator HELMS. If, by action or inaction as the case may be, the Sandinista regime—the Marxist regime in Nicaragua—is allowed to continue supressing the opposition, because of our lack of support, what effect is that going to have in the other countries? I would like for each of you to give a brief answer to that.

Suppose we just do not do anything to give any indication that we are for real in helping the people who yearn for freedom to regain it and retain it?

Mr. Ambassador.

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. I think, Senator, it would be a very serious blow to both the morale and the psychology of the peoples of the region. There seems to be a tendency in this country to believe that we are the only ones who are worried about the Sandinistas.

I can assure you that most definitely is not the case.

I do believe that these people look to us for support and will continue to look to us for support.

Our job is to find a way to give it to them.

Senator HELMS. And when you say "support," you are not talking about military fighting men in Central America, are you?

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. No.

Senator HELMS. Can we agree on that?

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I am chairman of the Western Hemisphere Affairs Subcommittee of this committee and I have met with most of the people in leadership in Central America. I have never heard one say we want your soldiers down there. All they need is a minimal amount of help.

Do the other three of you agree with that?

Ambassador PICKERING. Yes.

Ambassador BERGOLD. [Nods affirmatively.]

Ambassador NEGROPONTE. [Nods affirmatively.]

Senator HELMS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator Helms.

Senator Zorinsky, we have a 10-minute limit.

Senator EVANS. Mr. Chairman, excuse me. I wonder if Senator Zorinsky might yield. I won't be able to ask any questions because I must leave at 11:30 or shortly thereafter.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Zorinsky, would you yield to Senator Evans?

Senator ZORINSKY. Yes, of course.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Senator Evans.

Senator EVANS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Senator Zorinsky.

I would like to start by proceeding along the same lines that Senator Biden was proceeding. This may be an oversimplification, and tell me if it is. Perhaps Ambassador Shlaudeman can begin with a response.

Now we heard, and I would tend to agree, that no government self destructs, at least not voluntarily. Second, we have heard that if a free election were to be held in Nicaragua, Ortega could not win, although he might end up with a substantial minority.

I heard you say that, if free and open elections were held, and regular elections continued to be scheduled, then we would accept a Marxist-Leninist state, if that is what the people of that country chose. I also continually heard about the evils of a Marxist-Leninist state in Central America and the effects it could have on neighboring countries. It seems to me that those four statements just don't add up.

We end up either with the conclusion that a Marxist-Leninist state in Nicaragua is evil, cannot be tolerated, and must be destroyed, or that it is an annoyance which can be tolerated, as long as people in that country choose that form of government.

Now, which is it?

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. Senator, Marxist-Leninist states don't hold real elections.

Senator EVANS. But you said if they did, and if that current leadership were to be elected with the same policies and the same direction as they have now, you'd end up with the same situation.

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. I think I also said if they were to enter into and live up to the commitments of the Contadora peace process, which require democratic elections, periodic elections, freedom of press and freedom of speech, there would be a change in their ideology.

Now, they say themselves that they are not, depending on when you talk to them, Marxist-Leninist, that this is a uniquely Nicaraguan revolution, with a uniquely Nicaraguan ideology.

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Senator EVANS. Do we believe that?

Ambassador NEGROPONTE. Up until now, that has not been the case. But here they have an opportunity—a very significant opportunity—to change, to take this problem and reduce it to Nicaraguan terms. They have the opportunity to solve a Nicaraguan problem among Nicaraguans.

Senator EVANS. Are you aware of any case, anywhere in the world, at any time, at least in modern history, where external pressure, without military force, has caused a government to change its stripes and change its whole nature voluntarily?

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. I am not. But I think this is a unique situation.

These people have entered into obligations they assumed to their neighbors and to the other countries of the region and the Contadora process, that I think provides a very unique situation.

Perhaps Ambassador Bergold would like to comment on what I think are really questions directed at the nature of the Nicaraguan Government.

Senator EVANS. I'd appreciate that. With that same line of assumptions, where do we end up? What kind of threat are they?

Ambassador BERGOLD. Senator, my background is mostly in Eastern Europe.

My sense of the present leadership and the senior cadres of Nicaragua is that they are unquestionably Marxist-Leninist.

I don't think there is any ambiguity about that. In private, and on many public occasions, they have said that they are.

The point is that they are a long way from the Soviet Union, from the motherland of socialism. Rather than developing a Marxist-Leninist revolution under the overhang of Soviet power, they are developing a Marxist-Leninist revolution under the overhang of American power.

That is one reason why the models are different and why the possibilities and expectations may be different.

The revolution in Nicaragua is not consolidated. Whether or not you like the resistance or the Contras that is one thing that they have contributed mightily to, and it is not an inconsiderable achievement.

That means that the political philosophy, the political direction, at least in terms of tactics, if not in terms of fundamental ideology, is somewhat in flux.

There are no analogues to be found in Eastern Europe. There is the opportunity, therefore, with this particular revolution, to try to induce the kind of changes through a policy of national reconciliation that indeed was very promising when the revolution itself began in 1979.

It was the Sandinistas who elected not to pursue that course. It was the Sandinistas who sloughed off the bourgeois or the democratic elements who joined them in the revolution.

Let them invite them back in. Let them deal with the opposition, both armed and unarmed. And, if they are willing to do that, and, as Harry Shlaudeman says, if they are willing to accept to their obligations under the Contadora process and the Twenty-One Points and the September 7 draft, we may see the possibility for

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the kind of change which has not been evident in other parts of the world in Marxist-Leninist regimes.

Senator EVANS. It sounds like a slim hope, that that kind of external pressure, short of force, is going to cause them to voluntarily move very far, especially if it is in opposition to their own expressed, fundamental political beliefs. It sort of strains the ability to believe that is going to happen.

What happens if we try to exert internal pressure? What happens if we support, to the degree the President originally asked for, the Contras? What happens if we push as hard as we can, but to no avail? Then what? What do we do then if that does not cause the kind of change or bring about the modification of behavior that we are seeking? What then do we do?

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. I think, as Harry Bergold said, the real point is that they have not yet consolidated a Marxist-Leninist regime.

Senator EVANS. But assume that they do, that they continue the consolidation, refuse to respond, and that our support of the Contras, even as the President originally asked for, is insufficient. What, then, should be our policy? Have we thought about what next action we might take, and if so, what is it?

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. That, of course, Senator, can take place under either alternative—support for the resistance or no support for the resistance.

Senator EVANS. Yes, that's right.

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. I think, myself, that it is more likely to take place under the second of those.

Senator EVANS. I think so, too.

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. That is, no support for the resistance.

Senator EVANS. Yes.

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. I would have to answer you as I think Tom Pickering answered a similar question: I can't speak for the President. I think we would have to look very carefully at our entire policy.

Senator EVANS. I have one final question. This would be for Ambassador Bergold.

I understand that we are still Nicaragua's biggest customer, or close to it. There is a good deal of trade from there. Why not use economic sanctions? Would they be valuable in this process? I have not heard much about proposed use of that.

Ambassador BERGOLD. We take about $50 million a year of their exports.

Senator EVANS. Where would that rank us in comparison with other buyers?

Ambassador BERGOLD. If you don't take the Soviet bloc as a whole, if you keep it divided quite properly into countries, we are still one of their largest trading partners.

If you include Soviet oil, the total trade of the Soviet Union with Nicaragua will probably surpass ours this year.

The point is that as one looks at the possibilities for reallocation of those Nicaraguan exports and the obvious willingness of the Socialist bloc and some of the radical Arabs to take those exports at their own economic disadvantage, if need be, the Nicaraguans in the first year of an economic boycott could place well over half of

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those exports elsewhere, and probably by the second year could place a good portion of the second half.

Now, that does not mean that it may, at some point in time, not be very worth doing for political reasons. I am not saying it is a bad idea. I am just trying to give you the numbers in terms of an explanation.

Senator EVANS. So, while it may have political value, the actual value of economic pressure on the government may not be very large?

Ambassador BERGOLD. It would have a real value, but it would have a value on the scale that I described.

Senator EVANS. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank the Senator from Nebraska once again.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator Evans.

Senator Zorinsky.

Senator ZORINSKY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Bergold, what kind of relationship do you have with Daniel Ortega?

Ambassador BERGOLD. I have met Daniel Ortega a couple of times privately, Senator. I would not call it a warm relationship, and one would not expect that it would be.

It is a frank, business-like relationship. When we do meet, we exchange views in a very open and direct manner. I find it productive. I would like to meet him more often than I do, and I would like to meet other members of the leadership more often than I am able to do.

But I do understand, given the general quality of the relations between the two countries, that it is not likely to improve dramatically.

Senator ZORINSKY. Do you feel we should continue to have diplomatic relations with Nicaragua in view of the administration's position that they are such a threat to the freedom of our country and to the very existence of our democratic way of life up here and the domino effect they may create?

Wouldn't it be better if we severed our diplomatic ties with them?

Ambassador BERGOLD. I think that we have laid out, both Harry Shlaudeman and John Negroponte have laid out the very important diplomatic, negotiating, and political dimensions of our policy toward Nicaragua.

This is not a one dimensional policy. It is not a policy that is solely based on military aspects. If we are to continue to talk to them, to try to induce the sorts of changes which my colleagues and I have described in both our opening statements and in our replies to your colleagues, it is very important to have an Embassy there as the base for such exchange and for such intercourse.

Senator ZORINSKY. I just want to point out that there is no Egyptian Ambassador in Israel, and yet the two countries seem able to communicate with each other.

Do you believe in the Contadora process?

Ambassador BERGOLD. I believe in it very much.

Senator ZORINSKY. Do you think it has any hope of succeeding?

Ambassador BERGOLD. Of course I do.

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Senator ZORINSKY. Do you think there is a parallel course that we should take bilaterally with Nicaragua in addition to the Contadora process, or do you think that would further confuse the situation?

Ambassador BERGOLD. We have had numerous bilateral meetings, besides the meetings that take place with respect to the Embassy between me and others. Ambassador Shlaudeman has had numerous bilateral meetings. I was privileged to be part of the delegation which he headed in Manzanillo. You know of those meetings, and there have been subsequent meetings. We are by no means without bilateral contact, both in Managua and in other capitals.

Senator ZORINSKY. You see, I have a problem explaining all of this to my central America, which is where Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas are. After listening to the administration talk about the threat to democracy and how horrible the happenings are in Central America, my constituents see on the evening news an American flag flying over our Embassy in Managua. And the President has accepted the papers of the Nicaraguan Ambassador to represent the Sandinistas in this country. So, my constituents say, Zorinsky, you mean they want $14 million of my tax money to overthrow a country that my flag is flying over?

I have a hard time explaining that back home. In fact, I have a hard time explaining it anywhere. [Laughter.]

You know, if there is a set reply for that question, I would like to know the answer.

You are not talking to professional diplomats when you talk to people out there. You are talking to the average American.

As a matter of fact, I have asked my staff to provide me with a preliminary draft of a declaration of war because my constituents understand that very well.

Let me ask you this question.

How much do the Contras receive as pay for being in their army to fight against the Sandinistas?

Ambassador BERGOLD. I have no idea, Senator.

Does anybody know?

Ambassador NEGROPONTE. It is not my understanding that they are paid at all, Senator, although I think they receive some subsistence for their food.

Of course, we are not involved in providing that kind of support anymore, and have not been doing so since May or last year.

Senator ZORINSKY. Well, officials of the same group which gave me my paycheck today, and I suppose yours is the same color—it says "United States of America" on it—tell me that we are.

Now, maybe different people told us different things, but they belong to the same government.

I was informed that the cadre and the officers are being paid.

Ambassador NEGROPONTE. We have not provided any support to them, as a matter of law, if I am not mistaken, since May or June of last year.

Senator ZORINSKY. Well, maybe that is true, but prior to that, they were recruited and paid by Federal dollars, by U.S. tax dollars. At least that is what I was informed.

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Ambassador NEGROPONTE. My understanding is that subsistence was provided to the forces in the field; that is, enough money to pay for food; and that some of the officers were receiving salaries.

Senator ZORINSKY. But that is a far cry from your original answer when I asked the question.

Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Zorinsky.

Gentlemen, Senator Zorinsky has raised questions with you which just reiterate, it seems to me, that the policy we have and the policy that we are trying to develop may be a correct one, but it is a complex policy.

Essentially, we have determined upon covert activity and remained in covert activity because of the feeling that, under international law, if we were involved in overt activity, this would verge upon a declaration of war or might be interpreted in that way in international law, or might complicate some of our relationships with other Latin American countries.

This problem as to why we ought to be in a covert situation, as opposed to an overt one is a very difficult one for the public to understand.

Beyond that, the proposition that many members have explored today—whether, through pressure, a government, described as a Marxist-Leninist government, moving toward totalitarian control—can change to become one of openness to political parties, freedom of the press, plurality, defies the imagination of many persons.

It may be that this will be a historical first. Clearly, it is a better thing to attempt, in my judgment, than a declaration of war and a movement of forces to overthrow a government that we hope might have reform and that had pledged earlier in its existence to do some things which it now refuses to do.

It is a difficult proposition to obtain public understanding and public support for this sophisticated approach. That is a part of the burden that you have, that we have, and that the President has now.

Let me just ask this question in view of all of that.

Ambassador Bergold, you have testified that the economy of Nicaragua is in a shambles and things are becoming somewhat more difficult for reasons that you describe.

What will happen in the event that U.S. military assistance for the Contras—or perhaps any assistance for the Contras—is denied? At that point, the Contras are still there in one form or another. The forces of Eden Pastora are apparently still relatively independent of other Contra forces.

At least as recent as his visit to my office, he indicated that he planned to continue on in any event, regardless of what happens here today or in the Congress. If the economy, as a matter of fact continues toward disintegration and there is a lack of confidence in that government, can you describe, absent any further pressure by the United States, what the evolution of affairs is likely to be?

How will the government subsist? What will happen to Eden Pastora?

In other words, try to trace through, if you can, speculatively, how the parties are going to react in that kind of milieu.

Ambassador BERGOLD. I think the important question is, Senator, what reaction the Contras themselves would have to the perception that the United States was, in effect, turning its back on them and walking away. What impact on their morale would ensue? Would, in fact, they continue to be as effective a fighting force as they are today? What would be the reaction of some of the neighboring governments if they had the same perception of a change in American resolve on this issue?

Those, admittedly, are imponderables. But I think they probably would be negative from the point of view of application of pressure.

If, indeed, such pressure were attenuated, it would seem to me that it would have an effect on the power position of the Sandinistas and on their policy choices both internally and externally.

Internally, it would allow them to devote most of the resources which have been going to deal with the insurgency to the consolidation of the revolution at home. This would include further hardening and construction of their power position, to a remedial addressing of the economy, moving, perhaps more of it into the social sector, the government sector, but, nonetheless, trying to address some of these problems that have not been addressed.

Externally, whether or not you like the Contras, they have broken the offensive power of the Sandinista revolution. No longer does one sense that the Sandinistas are looking for adventures quite so avidly in other Central American countries. Rather, they are looking inward, trying to save their own revolution.

Therefore, the disappearance of these pressures would, at least theoretically—reopen that policy and allow the Sandinistas to look toward more efforts at internationalism among their neighbors.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, in that event, in essence you are saying that, under the circumstances outlined, the economy of Nicaragua might get better and the Sandinista government might even become more popular, as well as consolidate its power. But the fears might be enhanced because this Marxist-Leninist government has consolidated, is still there, is potentially a threat, and the United States apparently has become less firm, really, in dealing with it. So, the confidence that the Hondurans, the Guatemalans, the Costa Ricans might have in what we are going to do probably dissipates in that situation

So, even a fairly weak Nicaragua maybe has much greater authority in the Central American area under those circumstances.

Ambassador BERGOLD. I think you are absolutely right, Mr. Chairman.

A point that neither of us has mentioned in this dialog is the enormous fire power which the Sandinistas have acquired from the Soviets. This firepower could be used offensively since the defensive mission, even if we believe in it, would be removed.

The CHAIRMAN. Which then have intimidating powers with regard to all the neighbors, since, as you say, there no longer is the Contra problem and, therefore, the firepower can be used to threaten, even if it is not utilized in actual combat.

Ambassador BERGOLD. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, under those circumstances, it appears to me—and this is a speculation on what will happen in this country, quite apart from Nicaragua—that at some point it is very likely

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that the Congress will have to revisit the problem and that things will not go well. This is because, essentially, we are committed, as the Kissinger Report suggested, to multiyear funding of projects throughout Central America that would help the people. This course would prove very difficult to hold under circumstances of civil war or the threat of subversion.

It would appear, under the scenario we are painting now, that the threat of subversion will continue, perhaps even be enhanced, and the problem, therefore, of an overall, comprehensive, economic change in Central America will become very difficult—quite apart from public resistance, maybe, to spend the money at all.

Under these circumstances, it seems to me that at some point things will not go well for us, and the public will be asked to consider action of a different sort—I suppose to either shore things up or to put down some military problem.

Is it likely in your judgment that, within, say, even a 3-year period of time, given the relief that nonsupport of the Contras would bring about, Nicaragua might engage in aggressive activity that would be perceived by our friend, President Monge in Costa Rica, for example, or our friend, President Suazo in Honduras, or President Duarte in El Salvador, as a threat to their sovereignty, or their security. In this case they would call upon us to help them and on that occasion ask us for military force to help them as allies, to save their governments, in essence, from the potential of either aggression or intimidation?

Do any of you have a speculative judgment as to whether that is a probability within an intermediate period of time?

Ambassador PICKERING. I would say it is a kind of reality now in El Salvador. One should not lose sight of the fact that it is a daily reality in the sense of command and control, training, supply lines that come in to El Salvador from Nicaragua. President Duarte is faced with that threat. He has asked us for assistance and we have responded.

The type and kind of assistance, of course, might change if the threat were to increase. I think that is the point of your question, and I think perhaps El Salvador more clearly illustrates that than any other case.

At the moment, I think that threat is under control. One would very much like to see it reduced.

It is my sense that it is only through the kind of program and initiative the President has proposed that you realistically can get that prospect in hand.

The CHAIRMAN. Ambassador Negroponte, do you have a thought with regard to the threat to Honduras?

Ambassador NEGROPONTE. The point that they have emphasized is that they don't want to have to call on us for some kind of direct military intervention. The point they repeatedly make and which I think has been made here this morning is that it would be preferable to address the issue at a lower cost now than to have to face a larger problem, with larger dimensions and potentially much higher cost, at a future date.

The CHAIRMAN. I think that, in my judgment, is the point.

At some stage, when Honduras, Costa Rica, Guatemala or El Salvador calls upon us for our Armed Forces and for our sacrifice, we

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will have to make a very tough decision in the Congress, a much tougher one than we have to make right now. It may be that the American people will say let El Salvador be El Salvador. Let the people down there work it out, or ditto for Honduras or others.

I don't know. I would hope that there would not be such a cavalier attitude.

But this, admittedly, is a fairly low cost policy to forestall very high costs that some Congress and some President will have to revisit if we are unable, really, to master it presently.

Senator Pell.

Senator PELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize for not being here earlier. I had other commitments.

I will not ask a question at this time.

But I do want to congratulate you on the thoughtfulness of this hearing and the quality of the witnesses and the professional views that they advance.

Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator Pell.

Senator Biden.

Senator BIDEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, we who hold elected public office, are always quick to suggest what the American people think and what they deserve. It is usually the preamble to something which advances our own prejudices.

But it seems to me that one of the reasons why there is such confusion on the part of the public—resulting in public opinion in opposition to "U.S. involvement in" and "support for"—is that they don't think we are being candid with them.

I think they deserve a little candor.

You fellows have been candid today. I am not suggesting that you have not been.

But they have come from an experience where the objectives seem to have changed as we went along, where they were never quite sure what we were doing, where one thing was stated and it led to another thing.

This administration, to use a phrase that the chairman uses in other contexts, has had visited upon it the sins of past administrations.

Let's assume it has made no mistakes whatsoever in foreign policy. Now I am not being facetious. Notwithstanding that, the American people are not nearly as trustful as they were 20 years ago, when a President could say "follow me," or when a Congress or a Foreign Relations Committee said, "if you knew what we knew, you'd know we should be doing such and such."

That does not work any more. Let's not argue whether it should or should not.

But the real concern here is, when you cut everything else aside, is that in my view, the American people want to know if American boys are going to be fighting down there. That is what it is all about.

Strange as it sounds, the chairman and I agree on the ultimate conclusion probably more than most people think, as to what is likely to happen. It would be a disaster, in my view, if there were no American presence in the region—an absolute disaster.

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I disagree with some of my liberal friends who suggest that we can just work this out economically and politically.

It is equally a disaster, in my view however, if we make a commitment we do not plan on standing by.

So, what I want to pursue with you is what is our commitment. By definition, it seems to me that we have established here this morning that a Marxist-Leninist government is committed to export of terrorism, communism, and revolution, no matter what they say or what they do. If they are, in fact, Marxist-Leninist, they are committed to that.

The corollary to that is that by definition, a Marxist-Leninist government cannot allow itself to be subject to free election. It cannot be democratized.

And, by definition we have established that this is a Marxist-Leninist government.

So, we have pretty well set up the situation. The Sandinistas are, by definition, Marxists-Leninists. That is the administration's proposition. By definition, Marxist-Leninist governments can never agree to democratization. By definition, Marxist-Leninist governments must export revolution.

Now, doesn't this require us to reach a conclusion, as we are about to make an enormous and significant and profound moral commitment. We are about to make, if we have not done so already, a moral commitment, as a nation, to put the full faith and credit of the United States behind a policy and activity that is embodied in the form and persons of the Contras.

Now I might add one other thing. It seems that, by definition, there can be no negotiation, no negotiated settlement with a Marxist-Leninist government, because we're having, as a precondition, that they must democratize their government. That is a precondition. We have established that Marxist-Leninist governments do not democratize themselves.

So, we cannot do this by negotiation. We are going to have to physically beat them.

Now, what happens if, whatever aid we give—$14 million, $40 million, or $400 million—the end result is, 6 months, 1 year, 2 years, or 3 years from now, the remnants of the fighting machine of the Contras are up against the wall, about to be crushed by this Sandinista government?

I know this is something you don't want to contemplate. I know you are going to say "well, that won't happen." But it seems to me that, as policymakers, we have to be willing to know what our next step will be. And that is not an unreasonable prospect.

The intelligence community constantly tells me—unless it has changed its opinion in the last months, and I was on that committee for 8 years—that the Contras cannot physically overthrow the Sandinista government, and they probably can't, in their present form, with all the aid we are contemplating giving them, do fundamental damage to the present government, the Sandinista government.

So, what happens, even if it is only a 25-percent change, that we get to the point where the Nicaraguan Army, further beefed up with Cuban and Soviet military personnel, military force, and mili-

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tary equipment, is in the process of crushing the main force of this counter-guerrilla freedom fighting organization?

After all, guerrillas become armies when they reach the numbers necessary to overthrow governments of the nature of the Sandinistas. You have all already established that. The administration has established clearly that this is a juggernaut of a fighting machine that the Nicaraguans have. It is a juggernaut.

Now, where do we go, fellows? They are up against the wall.

Don't we have, as a matter of moral imperative for this country, to send in American troops to save them? Isn't that an absolute requirement, if it got to that point?

Anyone who wishes may respond to that.

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. Senator, I would just like to go back to the way you led up to this.

What I thought, at least, after Harry Bergold's statement, is we were in agreement that this particular regime is not a consolidated regime. It is true that Marxist-Leninist regimes, which are consolidated and in full control, act in a——

Senator BIDEN. So, it is not a true Marxist-Leninist government?

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. In that sense, it is not, because they have not been able to consolidate fully, as they have, for example, in the Soviet Union and in Cuba.

Senator BIDEN. So, it is not. I want to make sure that we are precise here.

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. I wanted to say particularly on that that I think, under these peculiar circumstances—and they are quite peculiar—I could not agree with you that there is no possibility for a negotiated settlement, that there is no possibility for democratization.

I think these possibilities exist and the President's initiative opens the door to achieve that kind of result.

Senator BIDEN. I am prepared to accept that. Let's assume that is true. Let's assume the effect of our actions does not impede full consolidation and what is now not a true Marxist-Leninist government becomes a true Marxist-Leninist government.

Does that not lead us down the same path?

Ambassador NEGROPONTE. Ambassador Bergold's point—like the Contras or not, they have been an important factor in preventing the consolidation of the regime—means that if they could count on consistent U.S. support, they will be able to continue to play that role.

I would be reluctant to conclude that, by supporting the Contras, you would accelerate the consolidation of the Sandinista regime. I think precisely the opposite would happen.

Senator BIDEN. I am prepared to stipulate to that. All right, I am prepared to stipulate to that.

I am prepared to stipulate to the point that: In fact, aid to the Contras will not accelerate, but rather decelerate, consolidation. But my question is what happens if you and I are wrong—we have both been wrong before—and in fact, consolidation accelerates?

Aren't we, in fact, committing the full faith and credit of the U.S. Government behind those Contras and that if, in fact, it gets to the point that they are either physically imperiled or a consolidation occurs and they are up against the wall, that we must then

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make the next move, and that is commit whatever force is necessary to accomplish an objective?

Folks, I am telling you, the thing that I am prepared to do from the beginning. I just, say if for the record now—because it has all been out—I supported, in the beginning, your process. I supported the aid to the Contras. My problem is that I think we are not being very straightforward with the folks.

Big nations can't bluff. We went through that already and we lost a generation. We did not lose them physically. We lost them in other ways. We will, in fact, go through the same process again.

That is the only analogy to Vietnam in my view, and nothing else. We cannot bluff.

If everything we say here and set out as a condition, as the reason for our action is true as we have to assume, as reasonable policy-makers, it seems to me, that if it goes the other way, what will our course of action likely be. A too oft-quoted Vanderberg comment which I will quote now is "if you want us in on the landing, then bring us in on the takeoff." Let's make sure we know what we are talking about.

If we accept all that you have said to us today and all that you have been saying to us for the last year and half, if the policy fails to produce the result that you are suggesting, we, in fact, inherit a moral obligation that is overwhelming. It may be one that we are prepared to accept and that I believe we can sell to the American people. I believe we can do it.

If we go that route, I am prepared to have a very different view on where we are. But I am not prepared to be a party—not that you need me—to a process that, on its face, is inconsistent. It is inconsistent to suggest, on the one hand, absolutely, we will not commit American forces, and on the other hand to suggest that we must commit.

You have said it here today. You have implied it directly or stated it specifically. We have a moral obligation to these freedom fighters, a moral obligation that was incurred when we initiated the action.

If we have that moral obligation now, does not that moral obligation become locked in cement as we pursue this policy?

All I am saying to you is let's acknowledge both sides of it. If it succeeds, wonderful. The American people are prepared to do that. I am prepared to do that. But the question is are we prepared to accept the consequences of its failure? That is what we should be debating in my view, here.

I think you—and I don't mean you, in particular, but you in an editorial sense—should be more forthcoming with us. We sit here and we say now, wait a minute, just define all this for us, they are Marxist, they are Leninist, they are bad, they are a threat, by definition, et cetera, et cetera—we are not going to ever commit U.S. forces. We are prepared to accept a democratically elected regime that is Marxist and Leninist—we are not prepared to live with the consequences.

I think we had better level.

Honestly, I am not trying to pick on you guys. In the next round of questioning I want to get in some questions about just who are the Contras, what are their names. You don't have to give them in

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open session. We can close it. What is the chain of command of the Contras? Who were they before? Who am I about to make this moral obligation to? Am I about to make it to a bunch of Somozista thugs? Or am I about to make it to a bunch of George Washingtons? Am I about to make it in the name of the American people for a regime that will produce a democratized community in Nicaragua? Or am I about to make it to a regime that will produce a right-wing repressive regime, equally as bad as the other?

The CHAIRMAN. Why don't you go ahead with your questions now, Senator.

Senator BIDEN. Thank you.

Well, then, who are they? Who are the Contras?

How many of the general command of the FDN, which I am told is about 45 general staff level officers, are former National Guardsmen, and how many of them are George Washingtons, or to quote the President, founding fathers? It may be that former National Guardsmen can become founding fathers. I am not being facetious.

What is our assessment of who they are?

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. Senator, this question came up yesterday in another hearing. Assistant Secretary Motley said that we would put all of this in writing, which we will do and we will get it to you.

[The information referred to follows:]

According to information provided by the FDN leadership, there are approximately 260 former National Guard members in the FDN—less than 2 percent of the FDN's total strength of some 15,000. The overwhelming number of the reported 15,000 FDN troops are peasants, workers, shopkeepers, businessmen and others with no previous ties to Somoza. Some 20 percent are former Sandinistas.

Senator BIDEN. Then I will not ask you to pursue that.

Do you agree, though, that it is important that we know who they are?

Ambassador SHLAUDEMAN. Oh, yes. That is quite right.

My own knowledge of them would indicate that they are certainly not Somozista thugs.

Let me make just one comment on what you are saying.

In my view, the entire hemisphere has a commitment to the Nicaraguan people. That commitment was acquired in the OAS in 1979. It is a very important commitment.

What you were talking about, the end result or the difficult choice that is thrust upon us at the end, could very well happen under either of the alternatives that you are considering here in the Congress right now. If the Congress refuses support for the resistance, or if the Congress gives support for the resistance, the same choice could very well be there.

Senator BIDEN. I don't dispute that. But I think we ought to make sure that we say what we are ready to do under either circumstance. This is not to suggest that there isn't any real, tough decision.

For example, I don't think anybody—well, I shouldn't say anybody—there are a few people, without mentioning them—who the chairman and I believe would say if the Soviets were about to establish a missile base or a major military base—in Nicaragua, a Soviet military base—that we would not say to the Soviets "if you do, here we come." I for one would subscribe.

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The reason why I supported the very same day so enthusiastically that overblown action in Grenada, while at the same time I have strong disagreement with the administration's policy, is because it had the capability of being a significant military adjunct to Soviet extension of power in the region—in my view.

Most Senators in both parties would say that if they truly believed the Soviet Union were about to establish such a base they would urge the President to send a message, similar to the Cuban missile crisis message—"if you do, here we come."

I subscribe to that point of view. I don't think I am in the minority here.

But, what we get is a lot of mumbo-jumbo. We get it on the left—and I am not pointing to anyone in particular. On the left we get the answer that these Sandinistas are really only just dedicated people who are bringing light, hope, and food to the region. On the right—and I am not pointing to anyone in particular- and I am looking beyond you, Dick. [Laughter.]

On the right we get the assertion that there is a juggernaut about to push its lance up through the rest of Latin America and into Texas.

Both are preposterous in my view.

So, what do we tell the American people?

I will not burden you with this now because I will wait for the military witnesses and the experts on defense. But, for example, is there any threat posed in Nicaragua that we could not, if we decided to use the full force of U.S. force, immediately respond to from the Caribbean, the Pacific, and the continental United States? Is there any such threat? I don't know of any.

Now, maybe I am mistaken. Maybe there are such threats.

It is really critically important, it seems to me, what is the next step we take here. It is not only what the downside of failing to support means,but what the downside of supporting if it does not work that is important.

Again, if we have a moral commitment now, can you imagine the argument that is going to take place 6 months, 8 months, or 1 year or 2 years from now when the general command of the FDN radios to Honduras "we are about to go under, it is the Alamo, we are about to go under?"

What decision does the commander on the ground in Honduras make? The first decision he will make is he will send it to Washington.

What decision does the President make? Doesn't he have to make the decision here we come? How can we do anything else, and shouldn't we just level that that is what we are getting ourselves into?

You can answer that if you wish. I don't blame you if you don't want to. I am not being smart. I really am not. It is a tough spot to be in. But it seems to me that we have to get to that point.

If you don't want to answer, I have more questions, specific questions, on the military side.

Ambassador NEGROPONTE. Just briefly, Senator, let me make two points.

It just seems to me that, as Ambassador Shlaudeman said, the situation you describe could happen under either scenario. There

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are many who would argue that it is more likely to happen in the absence of such support.

Senator BIDEN. I am prepared to acknowledge, and I do it publicly before all the world, that if, in fact, we vote down the Contra aid, it is possible that it could, in fact, enhance the prospects of the need for U.S. involvement—physical involvement—in the region. I acknowledge that.

Will you acknowledge that if, in fact, your program fails, we are committed to use U.S. force in the region?

Ambassador NEGROPONTE. My second point, and perhaps Ambassador Pickering may want to elaborate on it, is it seems to me the whole thrust of the policy has been designed to try to provide the local forces, the local people, with the wherewithal to promote their interests with materiel and economic assistance from us and to avoid any direct U.S. involvement.

I think El Salvador is the best example since it was 2 or 3 years ago that the specter of involvement of United States troops in El Salvador was being raised. It has been effectively avoided.

Senator BIDEN. I understand the design. I am not asking you to suggest that, in fact, your policy will fail. You obviously believe it will succeed. All I am asking you is whether or not we can avoid making the kind of mistake we made 20 years ago and acknowledge what the next logical step will be in case you are wrong.

Ambassador PICKERING. Obviously we have been trying to pursue a policy in Central America which, as my friend and colleague, Tony Motley, is fond of describing, is a policy in which we will not have another Cuba or another Vietnam.

Clearly, it is not beyond the mind of man, as you have clearly demonstrated, to divine a set of circumstances where the answer might have to be, on the one hand, yes, we will go on, and on the other hand no, we will not. That is the sort of decision that the President and the Congress have to make in those crucial times and on those crucial issues. We have defined some of those circumstances in advance in things as solemn as the NATO Treaty.

We are trying to pursue a policy in Central America in which we do not have to move to that critical step, or to define in advance for our enemies, or perhaps for our friends, when that critical step will have to come. We rather have tried to lay out for you a series of steps which we believe will have the desired effect. We will obviously have to wait and see how the situation develops. I am talking about a series of steps in which we have looked ahead—and I believe we have carefully looked ahead.

My experience in El Salvador has been that 2 years ago, people sitting where you are now might have been saying the same thing to me about the assistance we were providing to El Salvador. Where would it end, and would we have to put in the troops.

The answer was, Senator, (a) we don't know; and (b) we will define that at a time and under circumstances where the President and the Congress, who have the responsibility, will deal with it. But we believe the program, the El Salvador program, has a reasonable chance of success.

It has, in my view, demonstrated that reasonable chance of success. We are talking to you now about a similar program that we believe has a reasonable chance of success.

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Obviously, we are trying to convince you. You have a different view, perhaps, on that.

It is possible, however, to define a set of circumstances, I believe, where the logical outcome would have to be U.S. intervention. Clearly we are now in the realm of thinking out loud.

At this point, all I can say is, having gone through the El Salvador issue, I would reaffirm that my colleagues have told you from their own experience. We believe this particular proposal of the President's has a chance of producing success and there are good reasons why we should continue to do it. Its objective, I think we both agree, is an eminently desirable one.

Senator BIDEN. I would argue that comparing El Salvador and Nicaragua is comparing apples and oranges, as they say, because what we are talking about here is a policy that is designed to bring about a sitting government changing the predominant stripe that it now possesses, as opposed to what we had in El Salvador.

Let me pursue this line of questioning.

Ambassador PICKERING. Senator, could I just interrupt?

Senator BIDEN. Sure.

Ambassador PICKERING. With all respect, 2 years ago, your definition of what was going on in El Salvador was not only a definition accepted by all the critics of the administration, but, indeed, by some of its closet supporters.

Senator BIDEN. Was the definition dependent upon whether or not you could bring about a result that brought to power a specific man?

Ambassador PICKERING. It was democracy, human rights, and not a specific man. Obviously, we would not have gone into elections if we thought bringing to power a specific man was the answer. That's not the sort of policy one pursues under those circumstances.

Senator BIDEN. Let's pursue, for a moment, the results that have been accomplished by the millions of dollars of aid and the increase in the Contra force up to the number that it is at now—and I have been desperately looking to find those numbers, your numbers, not mine. I can't find them. What has that done? Has that brought about a reduction in the number of Cuban and Soviet advisers? Has that moderated the policies thus far?

What is the track record to date?

Ambassador BERGOLD. I tried, in answering the chairman's question, to say that I thought it had contributed importantly to changes in Sandinista policy, both internally and externally. It helped to move the situation more in the direction we would prefer.

Senator BIDEN. As it relates to consolidation, the way we have been using the phrase, has it increased or——

Ambassador BERGOLD. Inhibited.

Senator BIDEN. It's inhibited the consolidation.

What evidence do you have of that? I am not taking issue with you. I just want to know.

Ambassador BERGOLD. It is simply my judgment.

It is quite clear, for example, Senator, from public statements and statements that have been subsequently been revealed, that the reason the elections were held on the fourth of November had

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a great deal to do with the kinds of pressures that were being produced by the armed opposition.

Senator BIDEN. Was that a good thing, the election?

Ambassador BERGOLD. I think it was not a perfect thing. In terms of quality it was not a very good election.

But I think it was better than no election at all. It showed the possibilities of a process of democratization.

Senator BIDEN. It was a step in that process, then, in your opinion?

Ambassador BERGOLD. It was. You have said a couple of times that Marxists-Leninists do not hold elections.

Senator BIDEN. Well, that is what I am told by Jesse and by everyone else.

Ambassador BERGOLD. These Marxists-Leninists held an admittedly imperfect and flawed election which was, by structure, at least, in Marxist-Leninist terms, a bourgeois election.

Senator BIDEN. I happen to agree with you.

Ambassador BERGOLD. So, progress can be made.

On the external side, I made the point to the chairman that I thought the Contras had had a very important effect on Sandinista foreign policy with respect to their neighbors. It can't be proved. You must look at what might they have done if they had not had to devote all of their attention to the war.

Senator BIDEN. How about in sending arms into El Salvador? Has there been success in that?

Ambassador BERGOLD. I would have to leave that to the judgment of others. I don't believe I have heard anyone charge that that situation is more grievous than it was in 1980–81.

Senator BIDEN. I don't think it has been, but I have heard the charge.

Ambassador BERGOLD. So, I think the answer is that there has been a discernible effect, both internally and externally.

Senator BIDEN. I have trespassed too much on the chairman's time and the committee's time.

But, in addition to talking about getting us the information as to who the Contras are, rather than characterizing them—who they are and from whence they come, the command structure, et cetera—I would like to pursue some other points that I was going to pursue. I don't think we have time to do it now, so I will submit questions in writing to each of you, for I would like you to take a crack at them along with our military folks as well—questions such as how does the Nicaraguan military force match up with its neighbors, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Costa Rica? How do their air forces match up? What, in fact, are the relative strengths? We hear a number, that there are 152,000, I believe it is, counting militia, in the Nicaraguan force—that is, 62,000 active duty plus 57,000 reserves. That adds up to a total of 119,000. Are the total forces of the other Central American governments, which add up to roughly 150,000, comparable? Does it make sense to compare them?

Does it make any sense to compare the inadequate Nicaraguan air force to the more sophisticated Honduran air force? Does that counterbalance the tanks that the Nicaraguans have that we are worried about coming across the border?

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All of those questions I will submit in writing, with the chairman's permission, to each of you.

The CHAIRMAN. It is so ordered.

Senator BIDEN. I really do thank you gentlemen for your candor. I think, while you may not have helped anybody else, you have helped me in understanding more what the administration's position is. But I think we have a couple of more steps to go in my view.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Biden.

Let me just comment that we appreciate very much your coming this morning because you have afforded us an opportunity to focus on this question in a very acute way. Sometimes votes have that effect.

It appears to me that, in a bipartisan sense, we still have an opportunity to think through this problem over the weekend or in the next few days, as may be required. Your testimony has been very helpful.

I think Senator Biden's questioning indicates the soul-searching that he is going through and which I admit I am going through.

Let me just add some additional observations that I think we will have to deal with although, in your professional judgments, sometimes these things are left unspoken.

Secretary Shultz in other fora has suggested that we will be criticized either way with regard to money for the Contras. If we, to use a figure of speech, simply leave the money on a tree stump and somebody comes by and picks it up, that is one way of handling the problem. Others would say that it would be much better to maintain control of the operation, particularly when the Contras are accused of atrocities, or of misconduct, people ascribe those responsibilities to us because of money and support that we have given.

It appears to me that we have never quite decided which of the two options is preferable, although we would like to avoid the liabilities of either, as the case may be.

I would say that maybe, as Ambassador Pickering has pointed out, there are times in which policies evolve successfully and you don't need to make all the critical choices. Some take care of themselves.

But this may be an occasion, as Senator Biden has pointed out, where we have to make more critical choices than we would like to make. We obviously in the Congress have avoided making any more than we needed to in this situation.

Now we are faced with some consequences, too. It is fair game, as some might say, to say that the President lacks comprehension of the whole problem and, therefore, ought to be defeated on the issue. But then, having had the satisfaction of saying that, persons revisit the problem and say, you know, after all, somebody has to pick up the pieces at this stage.

I would hope we are picking them up even before the thing is broken and that was the purpose of the hearing this morning—to have a frank airing, in which you have helped us, and I think Senators have helped enormously in their questioning.

Finally, I would just observe that, although we have continually asked our friends in the Contadora group or in Latin America gen-

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erally to help us in this respect—to take responsibility for a region that is ours and theirs and all of ours together—we keep getting replies that governments really cannot afford to take those sorts of risks, or that the strength or the fragility, as the case may be, of some just does not permit that kind of leadership.

This leaves us, once again, in a very uncomfortable role, of being accused of being interventionist, on the one hand, and being accused of a lack of leadership resolve or what have you on the other.

Now, maybe that will always be our fate. But it appears to me that this thing sort of falls apart at the seams and very hard thinking will have to occur on the part of all the governments that you are now ministering unto, as well as some others, who really have not done their share, in my judgment, in this process. They found it very easy to fault the United States, but are going to find consequences that are very substantial when the United States cannot find its own mind and will in this and is sort of groping about.

I don't ask any of you for comments on those thoughts. I simply offer them as observations, as part of the colloquy we have had this morning.

On behalf of Senator Biden and all of those who have participated, we thank you for coming, and we thank you for your leadership on the firing line now.

This hearing is adjourned.

[Additional questions and answers follow:]

STATE DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSES TO ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR BIDEN

Question 1. How do the Nicaraguan armed forces match up in numbers with its neighbors Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Costa Rica? Shouldn't we view the Nicaraguan armed forces in the context of the overall military pictures in Central America?

Answer. The Nicaraguan armed forces number approximately 120,000. This figure includes 60,000 on active duty and 60,000 reserve and militia forces. This force is armed with relatively sophisticated military hardware such as Soviet T-55 medium battle tanks, PT-76 light-amphibious tanks, heavy artillery and helicopters including several of the Mi-24, one of the world's most advanced attack helicopters.

In contrast, Honduras has 17,200 men under arms, Guatemala 40,000 and El Salvador 41,150. Furthermore, none of these countries has weapons, particularly armor, of the same level of sophistication as Nicaragua. We shouldn't compare Nicaragua with the aggregate of regional forces. To do so would confirm their status as the leading regional military power.

Question 2. It seems that taken all together, the military establishments (regular armed forces, reserves, militia) of the other Central American countries (including Costa Rica's security forces) have superiority in numbers: Nicaragua 119,000 to about 153,000 for the others combined. Nicaragua is outnumbered by 34,000 troops. What is your response?

Answer. The superiority in numbers is illusory. It is belied by the need for states such as El Salvador and Guatemala to commit all their forces to counter insurgencies and by the fact that these countries do not have a tradition or experience with close military cooperation. Nicaragua has a larger force and more sophisticated equipment, particularly armor, air defense weapons and attack helicopters, than any other country in the region. Comparing Nicaragua with the total of regional forces only confirms and tends to legitimize its position as the dominant military power in the region. Our objective is to restore a balance in the military size and inventories among the countries in the region.

Question 3. How sophisticated is the Nicaraguan Air Force? Is it true that the Nicaraguans offer an offensive threat from the air?

Answer. As presently constituted, the Nicaraguan Air Force would be unlikely to gain air superiority in an offensive war against Honduras or El Salvador. The Nicaraguan Air Force does not contain modern jet fighter aircraft, but the Sandinistas

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have repeatedly stated their intention to acquire first line MIG fighters. Nicaraguan pilots have been undergoing training in Cuba and the Soviet bloc since the early 1980's. It does contain sophisticated helicopters, as well as transport aircraft and older conventional fighters. In late 1984 the Sandinistas acquired 5 to 8 MI-24/Hind D helicopter gunships. This is the Soviet's principal attack helicopter, holding the helicopters' speed record and can be armed with a multiple-barrel machine gun, guided missiles, rocket pods and bombs. These flying "tanks" can reach targets in Honduras, Costa Rica and El Salvador and add a new dimension to warfare in Central America. None of Nicaragua's neighbors possess this type of advanced helicopter.

In addition, airfield and command and control facilities are being upgraded to accommodate advanced fighter aircraft. The Punta Huete airport (now under construction), for example, has a 10,000 foot runway capable of accommodating any Soviet aircraft and has revetments for up to 16 jet fighters. Finally, Nicaragua has constructed the region's most thorough early radar warning system, providing coverage over most of Nicaragua and monitoring capability of aircraft movements deep into Honduras, El Salvador and Costa Rica. Indeed, the infrastructure for the region's most sophisticated air force is nearly in place, although the Sandinista military force is not yet able to make effective use of much of the equipment. Should Nicaragua obtain high performance aircraft, the threat to its neighbors already posed by the ground forces will increase substantially.

Question 4. Do the Nicaraguans have pilots trained to fly the recently acquired Soviet Hind helicopters?

Answer. Pilots are being trained to fly the Hind helicopter. I do not know the exact status of their training.

Question 5. Do you have reason to believe that the Nicaraguans offer an offensive threat to their neighbors or to the contras from the air?

Answer. The Nicaraguan air arm, at least absent the introduction of advanced jet aircraft, does not present a significant offensive threat to Honduras and El Salvador. Its conventional fighter aircraft and, particularly, its Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters could provide combat some support for Nicaraguan ground forces, but they would have difficulty obtaining air superiority. The Mi-24/Hind D helicopter gunship can reach targets in El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica. In addition, their own facilities are protected by a fairly sophisticated air defense system, which, however, the Sandinistas are not yet able to operate to full effectiveness.

Question 6. It is generally believed that Honduras and El Salvador have the best air arms in Central America; the Hondurans having French Supermystere supersonic fighter bombers and F-86E fighters. Is the Nicaraguan Air Force any match for the Honduran and the Salvadoran Air Forces?

Answer. Nicaragua does not have comparable fighter aircraft to those in the Honduran inventory but does have comparable aircraft to those of El Salvador. The Honduran aircraft, however, are aging, have reduced capabilities and suffer from maintenance problems. In addition, Nicaragua has a sophisticated air defense system which could partially neutralize opposing air forces, once the Sandinistas learn how to utilize it to full effectiveness.

Question 7. The Nicaraguans have the advantage in armor but is it not true that the Soviet T-54 and T-55 tanks are 25-30 years old? What is your reaction to the comments of a State Department military adviser who is quoted in the New York Times as saying that the tanks "couldn't survive against modern anti-tank weaponry"?

Answer. The Soviet T-54 and T-55 tanks were designed thirty years ago, but the T-55 was produced until 1981 and is considered a relatively effective medium tank. It is correct that these tanks can be defeated by modern weaponry. However, so can any other tank currently in use. Most importantly, there are no modern anti-tank weapons in Central America. The T-54 and T-55 tanks could survive against weaponry in use in the region, but are vulnerable to a wide range of anti-tank weapons which are readily available on the world market.

Question 8. I understand that the U.S. military believes that the Nicaraguans could launch a tank assault into Honduras' Choluteca Province. Shouldn't the Honduran Air Force be able to destroy these tanks in the open terrain of Choluteca?

Answer. The ability of the Honduran Air Force to defend against a tank attack would depend upon the number of planes available, the type of ordinance used, the strength of the attacker's air defense and several other variables. We do not believe, however, that the Honduran Air Force could stem an armor attack in Choluteca, given Nicaragua's military capabilities, unless it was acting in concert with significant Honduran ground forces.

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Question 9. Another route into Honduras would be due north on the American highway. Some military people believe that the tanks would have to be transported by flatbed trucks to the border. Wouldn't they be easy targets for the Honduran Air Force?

Answer. The ability of the Honduran Air Force to defend against a tank attack would depend upon the number of planes available, the type of ordinance used, the strength of the attackers' air defense and several other variables. We cannot provide a definitive answer to the question, but they would not be "easy targets" given Nicaragua's military capability.

Question 10. Doesn't it seem, given their vintage and the terrain of mountains, swamps and rivers in the region, that Nicaraguan tanks would not be that much of an effective offensive weapon?

Answer. The terrain in certain parts of Nicaragua is well suited to armored operations, while in other parts of the country, the terrain imposes some constraints. Tanks can operate easily in the flat plains of the west, which encompass the principal population and economic centers of the nation. On the other hand, the mountains and rugged terrain of the northern departments limit off-road maneuverability. Nevertheless, the EPS has deployed armored units in the north, particularly in such missions as escorting convoys and guarding fixed installations. The lowlands of the Atlantic Coast region inhibit off-road use of the heavy T–55s, but the Sandinistas could deploy the amphibious PT–76s in this region. While some observers have argued that the terrain in Central America renders tank of only marginal military value, the Sandinistas—and their Soviet suppliers—do not share this view; indeed, they have continued the rapid increase in the size of their tank force, doubling it in 1984 alone. However, given the numbers of tanks and supporting troops available to the Nicaraguans and the lack of a comparable armor capability elsewhere in the region, the GON has a credible armor threat.

Question 11. The Administration is very concerned, as we all are about the large number of Cuban military advisers and military personnel from the Soviet Union and other Eastern bloc countries. If the Contadora treaty was finally approved and implemented, it would provide for the withdrawal of most of the foreign military advisers. Wouldn't this solve the problem presented by the presence of the Cubans and the Soviets?

Answer. Removal of the Soviet and Cuban advisers would only solve part of the problem. There must also be an end to support for insurgency and restoration of the regional military balance.

[Whereupon, at 12:30 p.m., the committee adjourned, to reconvene upon the call of the Chair.]

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